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WOMEN AND THE STATE

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Women and the State.

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Women and the State.

HOW POLITICS AFFECT WOMEN.

In primitive times men protected their womenfolk from outside dangers and hunted for food, while women's duties were to care for the children and to cook the food which the men provided. There are people who think that the same holds true to-day, that the duties of men and of women can be divided into separate water-tight compartments, and we are continually hearing such trite phrases as "Women's sphere is the home," and "Women our angel, not our legislator." The people who use these phrases forget entirely that in primitive times the whole duty of men and women was summed up in this fair division of labour, but that, as civilisation advanced, and the idea of "each man for himself" gave way to the higher ideal of brotherhood, mutual service, and help, the State arose, creating quite a new set of duties and ideals. These new duties and ideals have been looked at almost exclusively from the point of view of men, although they affect both sexes equally and should be under joint control.

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We get the word "Politics" from the Greeks, who devoted much time to their state, and considered how best they could make their republic into an ideal community. They clearly understood that each individual had his two-fold duty—first his duty as an individual and in relation to his home, or his ethical duty ; secondly his duty to the state, or his political duty. Obviously, since the welfare of the State not only comprised the weal of the citizen as an individual, but questions of offence and defence relating to the citizens collectively, government was a complex matter. In such a community the warriors would have to take a foremost place, even as men must still do in times of war. They would hold councils of war, from which women would be excluded. These councils of war gradually evolved into councils of state, and so it came to pass that the supreme governing body consisted of men and not of women.

As men were thus occupied with questions of war and the state, they relegated their domestic duties almost entirely to the women. Only a few women had influence in public affairs, and they usually obtained that influence through their ascendancy over the affections of individual statesmen. Yet it was, and always has been, impossible to define where the duties of the State and of the home begin and end. The two cannot be separated. Property has always been a matter affecting both the State and the individual. Marriage and divorce, questions of inheritance, of the precedence of children's rights, as in the matter of the succession of the eldest son and the exclusion of daughters,

the rights of the industrious in regard to the fruit of their toil, the protection of the honest from thieves, the punishment of evil-doers, the safeguarding of health—all these are questions most vitally affecting the family and the private relationships of parents and children and husbands and wives, and yet they are the subject of legislation at every point. Could anything affect women more closely than these questions do ? If war is declared, who pays ultimately the cost but the women who give up their men to fight ? If finance and taxation are the question of the day, who does the nation's buying but the wives and mothers ? If public health is under discussion, who is more vitally interested in pure foods acts, in a pure milk supply, in clean streets, sanitation and hygiene than the mother ? Who is more anxious than she for the prevention of crime and the safeguarding of home and children ? Who is more concerned than she that a wise national policy shall prevail, and that extremists with impossible socialistic doctrines and their advocacy of mob rule shall be stopped from a career of anarchy and pillage and shall be prevented from getting even temporary control of the State ? All these are questions of politics, and women are vitally interested in them.

HOW WE ARE GOVERNED.

Civilisation is being torn in two at the present time by conflicting theories regarding the ideal form of government. At one time there were but two forms of government thought possible, the monarchical and the republican. The

anarchist then confined his activities wholly to the overthrow of autocrats and despots, but to-day we have the extraordinary spectacle of extremists as violently at work under the republican systems of France, America and Portugal as they used to be in the despotically governed lands of Russia and Germany. Why ? Because the anarchical ideal has changed from the desire to liberate the masses to the determination to control everything by an extreme socialism. To effect this the Soviet form of government is to be established throughout the world—and that means ultimately government by adventurers who know how to play upon the worst passions of the mob, and who are prepared to overthrow everything we hold dear.

When extremists in Australia advocate views of this kind, they seem to forget that we have inherited a free system of government that is infinitely more democratic and representative, as well as juster, than the one they uphold. Ours is a system of government by the people for the people, a system that affords representation in our Parliaments to every class, not merely to one section of the people, as it is under the Soviet system. Even though we have a King at our head, we are the oldest democracy in the world. Prior to the overthrow of the Czar Russia was little further advanced than we were at the time of King John—at the beginning of the thirteenth century ; and before the Kaiser abdicated, Germany had reached the stage known to the British in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries ! The Sovereign People of Britain made their power felt under the

Tudors, and ultimately overthrew the Stuarts altogether. France did not attain this liberty until 130 years ago. M. Thomsen, the French Labour representative who visited Australia recently, said that France had nothing to learn from the Soviet system of Russia—she passed through it after 1793. How much less, then, have the freest people on the face of the earth to learn from these fire-eaters ?

We all have an equal share in the government of our land, because every man and woman over the age of twenty-one has a vote. We safeguard ourselves against the passage of hasty and ill-considered legislation by having what is known as the bi-cameral system, or two houses of legislature, the upper and the lower, each of which keeps a check upon the other. Even then we have a further safeguard of our liberties in the presence of the King's representative, who, although he makes no laws, nor does he interfere with free discussion or the making of new measures, keeps careful watch upon bills passed by Parliament, and would refuse the consent of the Crown if they infringed in any way on the broad, solid basis of our Constitution, built upon charters of freedom won by the lifeblood of our fathers, in which the privileges of the Sovereign People are embedded. So our system of government is the most perfect that has yet been devised, although in recent years there has been a determined attempt to substitute government by Caucus for the rule of the people. Our system is based on such solid foundations of justice that we cannot afford to exchange it for another. There is more liberty in our old British con-

stitutional government than in any Soviet system invented in Russia, and Australians will support the party of true nationalism rather than tolerate for one moment the uncertainty of mob rule under the Soviet.

PARTY GOVERNMENT.

A socialistic paper said recently that it was the duty of its party to banish heredity from the land. How that party, or any party, is going to set aside one of nature's fundamental laws it did not attempt to explain. What they presumably meant by their inaccurate language was that hereditary rights must go. There is much talk of this kind abroad, and it is as dangerous as it is foolish. We have more than material rights which we have inherited. Our most precious heritage is that "flood of British freedom," which our forefathers won for us in many a long and stubborn fight for higher ideals and nobler nationhood. Among our inheritances must be reckoned that system of party government, which is now going through a process of change, and bringing into existence a broader and grander conception known as Nationalism. That nationalism is based upon patriotism, not upon purely material considerations. Let us never forget :

> "That man's the best cosmopolite,
> Who loves his native country best."

Party government, together with the names given to opposing factions, arose in a most interesting way. In 1648 a party of Whiggamores, or Western Scottish horsemen,

marched to Edinburgh to oppose King Charles I., and the Duke of Hamilton, and this became known in history as the Whiggamore raid. During those troublous times there were also a large number of Irish "bog-trotters" or "Tories," who went through the land, robbing and plundering the people, while professing to warmly espouse the royal cause. From these two parties came the political nicknames of Whig and Tory, the Tories standing for the maintenance of the King's supreme powers, and the Whigs defending popular rights, Parliamentary authority over the Crown, and toleration of dissenters in religion. Ultimately the Whigs evolved into the party known as Liberal with a left wing known as Radicals, while the Tories became Conservatives, who were so well satisfied with things as they were that they did not want to change them. The names Liberal and Conservative were brought into our early Australian politics, though the parties that bore them were not identical in all points of policy with similar parties in the old land. But in recent years a new force has made itself felt, and the old names are dying out. The Political Labour Party, born of the strength gained by trades unions, came into being, and the uprise of this new factor in the political arena forced the Conservatives and Liberals to coalesce, with the result that the Conservative party as such has disappeared. Since the war there has been another highly important political change. When disloyal extremists tried to prevent reinforcements going to the aid of the fighting men already in the field, thoughtful Labour-

ites, whose sons were the very backbone of the Australian army, were compelled to take a stand. The result was that they broke from the Political Labour Party to form with the Liberals a National Party. The section which refused to take this loyal and statesmanlike action took the name of the Official Labour Party. There can be no question that those who united their forces with those of Liberalism in the service of the Empire were the true representatives of Labour, for to their honour be it said, the great majority of working men chose country before selfish and ignoble ends. Yet the narrow and short-sighted advocates of Official Labour really, though unintentionally, did Australia a service. They awakened our citizens to the fact that there was in our midst a section which was willing to separate Australia from her hereditary connection with the British Empire, even though that separation would leave us at the mercy of coloured races and make Australia a splendid land to get out of for every mother of growing daughters.

"VOTING THE TICKET."

Sometimes in the evolution of political parties practices arise certainly undesirable, and necessitate the taking of counter measures by the opposite party to nullify their effect. To this class of undesirable practices belong Caucus Government, and what is known as "Voting the Ticket."

As far as Australian politics go, the Labour Party must take the credit, or rather the discredit, of introducing these objectionable methods, all of which tend to interfere with

the Sovereign Rights of the People, and which curtail our political freedom to an astonishing degree. In the early days of our history, there used to be a number of candidates —several Conservatives and Liberals offering themselves for election in each of the various constituencies—and each candidate would explain at election meetings what his views were on measures prominent at the time, and how he would vote on questions of the day if he were returned. In this way the vote was cast for men as well as for measures, and a man's character and personality counted largely for his success or failure at the polls. Now a change has come. Men are no longer able to candidate as free and independent individuals and expound to the electors what they would do in an unfettered Parliament. This change is due to the Labour Party. After the fearfully disastrous maritime strike in 1890, that party resolved to obtain political power to accomplish its ends rather than have constant recourse to crippling " direct action." To secure this power Labour men organised with amazing thoroughness. Their leaders developed the Caucus system. Behind closed doors they planned their policies, decided on a course of action, and ordered the rank and file to play at a game of " Follow My Leader." Every man who wished to become a candidate for Parliament in the Labour cause had to submit his name to the Caucus and from the names submitted a choice was made. Those who were rejected had to quietly stand down. In this way the elector gave up his right of choosing a candidate to selection committees. Instead of exercising

his right of individual selection, he bound himself to support the man chosen. This pre-selection of candidates, however, meant a great access of power for the Caucus, for it gave to the Caucus control over the men who were returned to Parliament by its favour. Parliamentarians were openly twitted with being mere mouthpieces, and they had no answer to the charge. In order to make effective this system of pre-selection there was adopted another undesirable measure, namely, "Voting the Ticket." This meant that the Labour machine extracted a pledge from every individual of the Labour rank and file to vote blindly for the Labour candidate, while free and independent electors continued to give their votes to the men who most appealed to them, and so scattered the votes. What was the result ? The Labour Party achieved a great and surprising success. In many cases they swept the polls. In every State but Victoria—and even there for two days—they were able to establish Labour Governments, and in the Commonwealth Parliament it seemed as if control had passed to them for ever. No alternative was left those who were opposed to the aims of Labour, or who feared what might come of unwise experiments, but to organise and vote in a similar way. In sheer self-defence it has become necessary to select candidates and vote solidly for them. Yet in so doing we cannot but be alive to the danger of fettering individual judgment unduly. The only escape lies in developing a true National party, which, by rising above party ends, will give liberty to all and make government by the people a reality.

TAXATION.

It is a common belief that women have no ability to understand finance, yet, strange to say, they have more to do with the spending of money in the community than men. The working man, for instance, hands his wages to his wife, who has the task of seeing that the money is spent to the best advantage. So it comes to pass that, whether women do or do not excel at mathematics, they understand from practical experience what money is, and what the spending of it involves. For the same reason they acquire a practical acquaintance with taxation.

Taxation in a modern community comes in two ways. Apart from municipal taxation (rates on property), it may come directly, in the form of land or income or amusement taxation, or it may come indirectly, as the bulk of it does, through the Customs. Direct taxation is something which the housekeeper readily understands, for it means the paying to the Government of a definite sum of money from the family income. Indirect taxation is not so apparent, but it is just as real. On almost all imported articles there is a duty fixed which may range from a small percentage of its value to a high one. This duty may be exacted because of a policy of Protection of native industries, or as a Revenue producing impost, the latter being imposed in Free Trade countries as well as in Protectionist ones. Customs duties are paid in the first place by the importers, but they are passed on to the consumer in the form of higher prices for goods ; and the housewife pays these duties when she buys the goods upon which duties have been levied.

Although taxation is a drain upon our individual resources, it is nevertheless necessary, for it provides the machinery for the working of the State. We derive many benefits from the money we pay in taxation, the protection of life and property, education, and defence being among the number.

Under our stysem of taxation it is obvious that the bulk of the money for Government must come from the pockets of those who are fairly well-to-do or rich. There is nothing in Australia corresponding to what existed in France prior to the revolution. There the poor people were taxed to support the rich ; here a poor man may pay no direct tax at all, while he may and does rceceive many privileges at the expense of the community. This is, no doubt, in accord with the spirit of Fraternity, but it has unfortunately given rise to a serious menace to our peace. The extremists, who have nothing to lose if their experiments turn out to be disastrous failures, are eager to grasp the entire wealth of the community and venture upon the wildest of experimental legislation. It therefore becomes a matter of the supremest importance for us to keep in power a Responsible Government that will act cautiously, especially as the meeting of our necessary obligations through the war must in any case impose a heavy burden upon the family purse, and therefore upon women, for a generation to come.

HOW POLITICS AFFECT OUR EVERYDAY LIFE.

Even primitive man gave over the realm of the home to women. The most conservative of present-day people agree that woman's sphere is home. Therefore, women are

closely concerned with everything that affects the home. How do political measures affect us ? Let us see. A baby is born to us. The law says that the child's birth must be registered within a few weeks, if it be born in wedlock ; if born out of wedlock, its birth must be notified within three days. Why ? To safeguard the new life, and in the case of the poor little "unwanted" mites, to prevent baby farming and infanticide. A marriage is to take place. There are numerous legal formalities to go through, including three days' notice. Why ? To safeguard the happiness of the two who wish to join their lives in one, and to stop the wretched trafficking of the "Marriage Shops." A death takes place. The law says that without the registration of that death burial cannot take place. Why ? To ensure to every citizen, as far as possible, the right to live out the full measure of his or her days without foul play cutting them short. We live in reasonable security from violence, and we go to bed at night in the assurance that our lives will be guarded while we sleep. Why ? Because the State provides protection from wrongdoers, and the policemen patrol the streets at night as well as by day. Our system of State Government is truly paternal in its operation, for throughout it has for its object the welfare of the homes of the people. The State is really nothing more or less than the sum total of our homes, and it is only through the well-ordered lives of the great majority, and the happy homes of most of us, that the State is able to conduct its affairs at all. Each home is a unit of the State, and as such, the State is intimately concerned in its well-being. Every unhappy home is a menace to the whole State ; every ill-assorted

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marriage is a problem for the State ; every divorce
its weal ; every invalid, every accident, every deat
cerns it vitally, since no member of the State lives to h
or dies to himself, and none can be lost, none can
without affecting for worse a circle of relations or fi
The State is anxious that every ideal shall be kept
that the purity of family life shall be maintained, tha
individual shall get the very most and best possible
life, not, as the poor unfortunate extremists say, becau
State wishes us to produce more and be more effici
that there will be more wealth for the Capitalist
because the only real security there is for any St
founded upon the happiness of the people as a whol
was said of Galahad that his strength was as the stren
ten because his heart was pure ; and so it is with the n
That nation alone is truly great whose sons are inspi
the loftiest aims, whose women are noblest and p
whose homes are happiest, and whose prosperity is
"Wage slavery" takes no part in the ideals of State
slavery of any kind, save slavery to base passions
ideals, exists in our wonderful land to-day. It is wo
duty, as the guardian of the home, to keep Australi
and she can do this most effectively through the medi
the ballot box.

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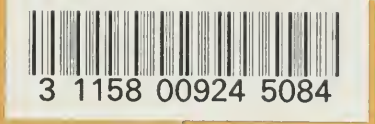
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